

## Educational Practice Journal

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<b>Major</b>	Mathematics Education	English Education
<b>Schools for practicum</b>	Bomyeong Middle School Seowon Middle School Crystal Elementary School	
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You are required to write a journal about your practice in a school with the following template.

You should write about your activities in teaching and managing in classroom, and consulting students. Please include information about what you observed and taught, where and when. Also write how the practice affected you; how did you develop as a teacher (or did not), what new did you learn, what was your overall expression of the practice etc.

Please write a journal everyday and get proved by the teacher of the class and return the journal to the exchange coordinator at the university (prof. Okhwa Lee). You can upload it on CBNU-practicum wikispaces (<http://cbnu-practicum.wikispaces.com/>).

General information		
Date	2011.10.28 Bomyeong Middle School	
Major activities (observation, support, teaching, testing, classroom/school culture, etc.)		
Type of activity	Description	Duration
	1 Meeting teachers and the principal, campus tour	1 h
	2 Math class observation	1 h
	3 English conversation class observation	1 h
	4 Computer class observation	1 h
	5 English conversation class observation	1 h
Reflection on differences from your home country	<p>1) The school's architecture was very similar to that of the CBNU high school: Three floors with a straight aisle, one grade on each floor, and 3 or 4 classes for each gender in each grade. The difference to Austria is that every school looks different in Austria and there is no common arrangement of classes. Possible explanation: Individualism.</p> <p>2) The math class I observed was very small (&lt;10 students) and, as far as I understood, only for students who struggle in math. We don't have such classes in Austria. The lesson was very interactive and the speed was slow, therefore quite different from the regular classes with many students.</p> <p>3) The English class was not a regular class, but a once-in-a-week class, in which the students are taught by a native speaker (Craig from Canada). We have very few native speakers in Austrian middle and high schools. In Korea that seems to be almost standard. However, I doubt the usefulness of an English conversation class with <u>40</u> students that is held once a week. Craig has to teach every single class of the school. Like this, he can hardly get to know the students and deal with their individual needs and problems with learning English. His classes have to be watched by a Korean assistant teacher, because the Korean law does not permit teachers in public schools who didn't get their teaching license in Korea.</p> <p>4) The students clean the school themselves. In Austria, that's done by skilled cleaning personnel. Maybe that's why the toilets are quite dirty in that middle school.</p>	
List of collected reference materials (pics, documentation, URL)	- Math worksheet: types of quadrangles	

General information		
Date	2011.11.04 Seowon Middle School	
Major activities (observation, support, teaching, testing, classroom/school culture, etc.)		
Type of activity	Description	Duration
	1 Meeting teachers and the vice principal, tour around school	1 h
	2 English conversation class observation (native speaker)	1 h
	3 English class observation	1 h
	4 English class observation	1 h
	5 Discussion with English teacher	1 h
	6 Discussion with native speaker (ESL teacher)	1 h
Reflection on differences from your home country	<p>1) The school building was different from the other two schools. There are two main buildings and the classrooms are not arranged as regularly structured. The facilities were quite run-down, as was the neighborhood. It is the biggest middle school in Cheongju.</p> <p>2) The native speaker's conversation class was quite similar to the one of Craig from Bomyeong middle school. The number of students was a bit smaller here (30 instead of 40), so the students' participation was better.</p> <p>3+4) I liked the Korean teacher's English class. She has a clear structure in her lessons; she always ends the class with singing a song together. She also asked her students to practice speaking and forming sentences, unlike other English lessons I observed in Korea, where the focus was on grammar explanations and translation.</p> <p>5) My friends from Estonia and I were temporarily relieved, when a Korean friend who was also doing his practicum at this school told us, that middle school students can go home around 3 to 4 pm. However, the English teacher corrected that – most of them go to Hagwon after school. That's why she doesn't give them much homework.</p> <p>6) According to the ESL teacher from California, the native speakers who teach in Korea mostly don't have any qualifications to be teachers. I think in Austria they wouldn't be allowed to work in public schools without proper qualifications. I remember that I once had an assistant teacher from America when I was in high school, but she was a student of education. On the one hand I envy Korean students for the chance they have to speak with and be taught by a native speaker regularly. On the other hand I'm not sure how beneficial this is for Korean students, because the system is a bit strange. The ESL teachers in the two middle schools don't have any responsibility over their student's progress. That makes the experience for the students by far not as intensive as in the Crystal elementary school, where I could clearly see how much influence the English teachers have had on the students' ability to speak English.</p>	

List of collected reference materials (pics, documentation, URL)	- English worksheet: Beauty in mathematics - School introduction booklet (in Korean)	
Signature of Guiding teacher	name	signature

General information		
Date	2011.11.18 Crystal Elementary School	
Major activities (observation, support, teaching, testing, classroom/school culture, etc.)		
Type of activity	Description	Duration
	1 Meeting the principal and ESL teachers and our assigned student friends, tour around school	1 h
	2 Social science class observation	1 h
	3 Estonia lesson observation	45 min
	4 Holding a presentation about Austria	45 min
	5 Answering questions to 5 students in an informal setting	30 min
	6 Discussion with ESL teachers	2 h
	7 Observing the school lottery for accepting next year's students	1 h
Reflection on differences from your home country		
<p>The day at the private elementary school changed my view of the Korean educational system radically. It showed me what an immense advantage children from wealthy families have here. Alone the size of classes in this school is 18 to 20 students and the classrooms are roughly twice as big as in the public schools we visited. I know that we this gap in Austria too, but it's much more striking here. In Austria, teachers at private schools are controlled and get paid by the government. In Korea, teachers at private schools have lower wages than their colleagues at public schools and they're not included in the teachers pension insurance system. I was told that only teachers who failed at the national teacher exam would apply for a job in a private school.</p> <p>Before I came to Korea this summer, I had had some ideas about Korean schools already. All of my friends from Kyung Hee University told me that their K-12 time was very hard and they were glad to get out of school. So I came here with the idea that Korean schools must ask a lot from the students and give them lots of work to do.</p> <p>However, what I could observe in the high school, the middle schools, and the elementary school was that the students don't really have to make an effort during the lessons (participation in class doesn't influence the grade basically), they don't get a lot of homework compared to Austrian students, and, unlike in Austria, it is very uncommon that students fail or drop out from school. This does not only apply to K-12 education but also to universities. Our university does not grade each student individually by their effort, but there is a certain proportion of grades that the professors are asked to give.</p>		

So why do the Korean students feel such a great pressure if it does not come from the institutions? Why did an ESL teacher from England<sup>1</sup>, who has been teaching in Korea for more than 7 years already, tell us, that if we haven't written it in our journals yet, we should write this in bold letters: **If there is one thing you must know, then it's that the Korean school system is highly competitive.**

I asked some of the eleven native speakers at Crystal elementary school about this and came to various conclusions:

- 1) The biggest pressure comes from Korean parents. As I was told, some of them think that compulsory schooling is not very helpful to their children. One English teacher told me that he once tried to communicate with parents about their son's lack of attention, but all he got as an answer was: "It's okay. We have plans for him later." Instead of caring about good results in regular school, the parents let their children go to private institutions, so-called Hagwons, where they have to study after school sometimes until 12 pm.<sup>2</sup> Rough estimates of the English teachers I talked to are that around 90% of the children go to Hagwons. From early childhood on the goal is to get one's children into one of the three top universities – Seoul National, Korea and Yonsei universities, which will almost guarantee the child a good job in the future.
- 2) Education and wealth seem to be interwoven in Korea. I feel very uncomfortable with the tendency I grasp here, that education is a business rather than a part of society that should be free and accessible for everyone. As this school was a private school with a monthly tuition of around 400€, one can easily guess that it's only for wealthy families. In the "lottery"<sup>3</sup> in the afternoon I saw some of the parents. The mothers were mostly very fashionable, wearing designer costumes and jewelry. I also met a clerk from my bank there, who had applied for a place for his son, but he did not get it. If you think of the income of a bank clerk, then 400€ per month and possibly the same amount or more for a Hagwon seems extremely high, even if the wages were as high as in Austria.
- 3) One ESL teacher from Canada told me that the suicide rate in Korea is very high. A [BBC article](#) confirms that there are more than 40 suicides a day in South Korea. Compared to Austria, the Korean suicide rate is twice as high for men and four times as high for women. This might not have a direct connection to Korea's educational treadmills, but it's likely that the high competition gives many young people the feeling of being a failure and clearly contributes to people getting stressed.
- 4) I was always wondering why so many Korean people can't swim or ride a bike. Now my explanation for this is that they do not have enough spare time to learn such things. I also wondered why Korean students are so quiet in school. There are several possible reasons for that:
  1. Corporal punishment still exists and is lawful in Korea. It's not heavy, but I heard many stories about slaps with wooden sticks. In one middle school I saw some boys who had to kneel in the aisle because they had been disobedient. See the links for further information in the reference section below.
  2. The Korean students are so used to studying all day long that they don't know how to play anymore. They all seemed like little adults to me when I asked them about their school life. They shrug their shoulders like a pathetic office worker and say something like "Well, it's a stupid exam I'm studying for, but I have to do it anyway." Naturally, Austrian students complain about exams too; it was more the indifference and lack of juvenile reluctance that struck me.
  3. One Korean who has finished his 2-year military service gave me another explanation. He said that the students behave well because the male teachers, who have finished their

military service, think that they should behave well, just like in military. Surprised, I asked back: "But just because the teachers think so doesn't mean that the students will do so." He answered: "It doesn't matter what the students think."

- 5) There are many other things that Korean education is criticized for. There's even a whole [list of criticism on Wikipedia](#). For example, I didn't know that relationships are forbidden in most Korean middle and high schools. That explains why the relationships between Korean university students have often reminded me of my own first experiences as a teenager.

To summarize, what speaks for an educational system like the one in South Korea is that it helped South Korea's economy to become one of Asia's strongest economies. For the whole country, the hard work of the students is very beneficial, but the individuals suffer from it. Therefore, in a developed country like Austria, we do not need to implement any of the practices prevalent in Korean schools.

<sup>1</sup> Names kept anonymous

<sup>2</sup> Find more information about Hagwons in this article: [\[Link\]](#)

<sup>3</sup> Inverted commas here because I was told that the result of it is decided beforehand.

List of collected  
reference materials  
(pics, documentation,  
URL)

- Guardian article about English teaching and Hagwons: [\[Link\]](#) (the comments are also worth reading)  
- BBC News article about the high suicide rate: [\[Link\]](#)  
- Corporal punishment in Korea: [\[Information\]](#) [\[Videos boys\]](#) [\[Videos girls\]](#)

Signature of Guiding  
teacher

name

signature